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Beneath the Star of Bethlehem

E. B. Wells



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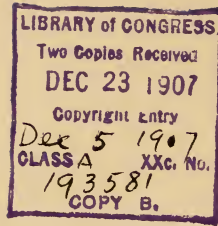
Beneath the Star of Bethlehem

BY
E. H. WELLS, M.D.



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DEDICATED TO
My Beloved Wife,
Née ANN ELIZABETH LAWRENCE.
Married, 1862.

*Our life-streams, well'd not far apart,
Strange confluence had in land remote:
In sixty God brought heart to heart;
In sixty-two our compact wrote.
A honey-moon and half of years
Have sped since you and I were wed:
Still hand in hand, mid joys, in tears,
We two life's tangled mazes tread.
Women two my life have fashioned;
The mother dear who gave me birth,
And thou, of all most impassioned,
Peer of best in life and worth.*

*"Gentle Annie," thou when first we met—
These years thy wand has swayed my life;
And thou art "gentle Annie" yet,
Beautiful, all-controlling wife.
Thy gentle touch makes lives forlorn
To brighten for eternity.
God keep the children thou hast borne,
In "strait way" trod by Christ and thee!
Down the hill we glide together;—
Oh, so softly, we almost seem
To hear a voice from the ether,—
"Come o'er and rest this side the stream."*

*The waters of the last chill river
Seem to lap our halting feet;
God grant we may cross together,
Together Christ, the Saviour, meet.*

Beneath the Star of Bethlehem

REFLECTIONS OF
A SOJOURNER AT BETHLEHEM
A. D., 1907

PROPHECY

O His temple shall suddenly come
The Lord whom ye seek,"¹ spake Jah
By latest of His school of seers:—
"The messenger of my covenant, whom
Ye delight in: behold he shall come."

NIGHT

Unconscious of the near event,
The nation *sleeps*:—for night has pent
Judæa in gloom, and o'er the vale
Of Jordan the chilly mists sail,
Drifting adown the Sea of Death:
In heaven, strange stir and hurried breath;
Keen zest;—and sounds of quickening pulse
Echo through all its vast expanse,
And angels to other angels spread
The hints of grander scenes ahead.

¹ Mal. iii. 1.

BENEATH THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

DAY-BREAK

List! Shrill and clear the cock's clarion
Breaks the dread stillness, and anon
Winds among Ramah's wooded dells.
As the bugle at reveille tells
Bivouacking men a new day's born,
And calls them to greet its glad morn,
So toiling men, and beasts who were
In village close, or pastures sere,
Now 'gan to stir—at first drowsily, slow—
But later more lively seemed to grow.

DAWN

A few faint dawn tints flush the East
And ruddy fingers touch the peaks
In far off regions Idumean.
Then as one scans the shifting scene,
The more sublime of Ariel's² mounts
Seem to thrust up their tops, as founts,
To catch the first bright glints of day.
No longer now can one essay
Each fresh touch of color t'outline,
So rapidly does the limner divine
Ply his brush dipt in glories, brewed
So multiform and many-hued,
No human artist for love or gain

² Is. xxix. 1.

BENEATH THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

Through months of labor can attain.
One by one the rays chase each other
Over hill-top, plain, and heather,
Peer into all but deepest place
And darkest gorge that mars the face
Of that sacred land.

One by one

The haunts and homes of man emerge:
The birds feel the glad thrill, and voice
Their joy at approaching release
From the terrors of night and of cold:
(Mixt with their carols, come from the folds
Bleatings of sheep, braying of asses,
And deep lowing of milk-laden kine.)
Higher peaks their glances soon reflect
Into devious regions more obscure:
Then adown the slopes the waxing brightness
Creeps,—stripping off the robes of Night,
Revealing the form and features
Of the land; ruggedness, nakedness,
Bare fields, leafless vines and trees:—
For 'twas the week of Winter Solstice.

SUNRISE. THE CAMP

And now i' the dusk a camp's astir,
Hard by the hot-springs of Emmaus,
In the land of Jacob's youngest son.
Many men are there; and women some,
Called from divers homes at pleasure

BENEATH THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

Special of Rome's imperial Caesar,
Under seal of Cyreneus.—
Compelling each one of the race
Of Heber to be enrolled in
The city of his nearest kin.

These have completed the bivouac
For night, and soon their camp will break:
The beasts are fed, and they have spread
A hasty meal of flesh and bread.

But see! while we but turned apace
To note the camp, the ruddy face
Of earth's regnant sun peers upon
The distant Sou-East horizon.
Next, he pours with unstinted hand
O'er all the salient points of land
A stream of purest molten gold;
And as it flows in rills of untold
Radiant beauty, the gleaming flames
Run down and down till all the plains
Are swept, and every dusky site
Is captured by th' invading light.

MATINS

E'en as th' exultant day sweeps away
Every vestige of the lingering night,
A joyous shout peals thro the camp;
Faces Southward turned are made bright
By sheen reflected from gilt tips
Of temple's pinnacles and crests.

BENEATH THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

“ Ho! Out of Zion, the perfection
Of beauty, God our Lord hath shined.”³
As the full-risen sun now blazes
With light, with bared head and faces
Toward the Holy City turned, they raise
Glad anthems in regal tongue of David.

“ The earth is the Lord’s, in fulness all
The world, and they that dwell therein.”
Jacent vales are with melody replete,
And hills the swelling chorus oft repeat,
“ Lift up your heads, O all ye gates, and ye
Everlasting doors, high uplifted be,
And the King of glory shall come in.
Who is this King of glory? He of hosts
The Lord: He is King of Glory. Telos.”⁴

As their glad acclaims to heaven arise,
And from hill to hill the echo flies,
No suspicion had those Jews devout
That He, of whom they sing and shout,
In covert form would enter soon
The Damascene gate, and ’fore high noon
Pass near Herod’s emblazoned temple,
And exit make through Zion portal.

THE CARAVAN MOVES

The hasty morning repast taken,
That caravan (save one) have shaken
Off fatigue, and afresh pursue

³ Ps. l. 1.

⁴ Ps. xxiv. 10.

BENEATH THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

Their onward course. Last comes to view
Moving with steady steps and soft,
A gentle ass, bearing aloft
A woman:—beauteous of face and form,
Serious and silent; tired; journey-worn,
But patient;—and by her side a man,
Stalwart son of Judah, walking
To th' ancestral home to be enrolled.

This man Joseph;—the woman Mary,
His espoused wife, great with child;
O'er shadowed near first of Jewish year
By the power of the Highest. Of her,
Seven centuries ago, Esaias said,
“Behold a virgin shall conceive
And bear a son: Immanuel,
Prince of Peace, call ye his name.”⁵

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem!

Behold, thy King cometh unto thee!
He is just, and having salvation.”⁶

JOSEPH AND MARY

Of that day's tedium naught is writ;
Nor is it meet that we should know
How, mayhap, they at noon-tide hour
Rested, hard by deep Siloam's pool,
Or within the temple's cincture—

⁵ Is. vii. 14.

⁶ Zec. ix. 10.

BENEATH THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

House erstwhile built and dedicate
To Jah, our supreme potentate.

God, now in human form incorporate,
Men would as little contemplate,
When, years later, from unborn state
To youth and manhood grown he sat
And taught within this temple's portals.

SUNSET

But the short day,—as time e'er flows,—
Verged like others towards its close.
The sun has run his round in haste,
And sunk behind the rocky waste,
That hides from view the dread Great Sea.
Some left the troupe in town or lea;
Others, with new ones gained, sped thro:
And now the solitary two,
With spirits ever fresh, since fed
On the sure promises of God,
But with increase of weariness
And pain of limb, their way pursue
Through the gathering gloom of twilight.
At last when the denser shades of night
Have shrouded all, these two unseen,
Enter the city Bethlehem.

BENEATH THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

BETHLEHEM

"Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be
Little 'mong the thousands of Judah,
Yet there shall come forth, out of thee,
Through me, Israel's future ruler: "⁷
Whose goings forth are from of old,
Aye, ere the birth of Time was told:
And now, henceforth, shall He be on
His throne, through eons times eon.

"Fruitful house of bread " thou wast named;
But this night, to thine own most famed,
Barren, cold. No inn, nor cheery home
Opens to these two way-worn and lone,
A welcome door. Queen of all most proud,
Lady elect of Almighty God,
Can find no helping fellow-woman
To sympathize; though in her womb
She bears about God's Son, by his grace
"Wonderful Counsellor, the Prince of Peace."
No room for tired Mary and her groom
In the haunts of men: Aye more, no room
For Him who framed the earth and wreathed
It with beauty and into men breathed
The vital spark, to differentiate
The *living* soul from the *inert* state.
No room with *man*, in mind like God,
Strange blending of divine with clod,

⁷ Micah v. 2.

BENEATH THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

Scarce of Heaven's sweetest joys debarred,
Till Satan's hellish hate had marred.

THE GROTTO

As last resort the royal pair
Betake them to natural lair
Of beasts of toil: At entrance grim
Of grotto, used to shelter them,
The maiden mother, chill, forlorn,
And almost ill, is gently borne
By strong arms of her faithful spouse
To rude bed of straw in dank house
Dimly lighted:—trifle remote
From the beasts, fellow guests though brutes,

They sleep:—

No witness tells how long
These two retained their humble home,
Nor when the looked-for issue came,
Epochal in the realm of Time.

THE DEAD OF NIGHT

Draw now the veil, ye angels fair,
Sent on rounds of deeds specific,
Soothe the pangs and speed the ending
Of travail at birth deific!
The sun had hurried behind his screen
That he might not look upon this scene:

BENEATH THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

As once again he shall hide his face,
When this same God in anguish cries
From Death's deepest hell of agony,
"Eloi! Lama Sabacthani!"
O sin of man! How measureless
The agonies and woes, that press
In ceaseless train thy loathsome trail;
Whelming potent Christ and sinner frail!

The night wore on, and one by one
All sounds, suggesting life, had grown
Faint and yet fainter in their sweep,
Till all was still—and potent sleep
Held sway in all that little realm,
Under ground:—Quiet e'en the beasts.

GENESIS

In the beginning, ere earth roamed,
Chaos was, and silence profound:
For time was, before Spirit moved
Upon the face of night, and light glowed.
So now does this presage the utterance
Of that same potent word which strives
To tell dying men of the entrance
Of a new Light and fuller lives.
And He who came first to create
Comes now once more to re-create.

How dare we try to tell?—How strive
To comprehend the coming of that Life

BENEATH THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

When to th' immaculate maiden,
Affrighted at his salutation,
Gabriel said, " Hail highly favored,
The Lord is with thee, ever blessed
Thou, among and above all women " ? ⁸
Annunciation coeval
With the indwelling of principle
Omnific, that vitalizes
The molecule, and sets in
Motion those mysterious forces,
That, interacting, make and bind cell
To other cell, in order perfect
And unerring, till symmetric
Whole at end appears complete:
Elaborated and evolved.⁹

THE BIRTH

A gasp for breath—a cry—a wail—
A child is born, with living soul!—
The body, human—the spirit, God!
Gestation concluded, period
Accomplished, the exalted Mary
Became a mother. Her progeny
In swaddling-clothes she wrapped,
And laid the precious son of Man¹⁰
In manger, hewn of stone, mayhap
Not unlike that other, larger planned,
Which after one brief life-course

⁸ Luke i. 28.

⁹ Ps. cxxxix. 14-16.

¹⁰ Luke ii. 6.

BENEATH THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

Should encase his spiritless corse,
That, sepulcher;—this, a cradle.

LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Lo! a miracle! the grotto's
Ceiling with mild effulgence glows,
From humble manger corruscate!
He, who, at the first be-spake
His universe to pass from realm
Of Chaos, with Night o'erwhelmed,
To cheery scope of His bright face,
As God-man comes again apace,
And reposes now as helpless babe!
Jesus, Savior, (for thus He's named)
Light of the world from first became:
In conception and resurrection
God!—In birth and death very *man*.

THE MADONNA

Mater Beate! Ne'er did woman feel,
As thou dost now, of mother-love the thrill:
Thine own fair face reflecting matchless glow,
Aureole of which is flung about thee now,
Like robe of gossamer, made to shine
With radiance from thy babe divine!
But how can human pen attempt
To write of things coincident?
Lo! As here on earth transacted,

BENEATH THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

Scene followed scene duly enacted,
In Heaven, interest was acute.
The supernal eyeing the terrene.
From the presence of great "I am,"
Through spaces marked by finite man
As myriads of light-years,¹¹ came
An angel of glory:—the same
Who stood by at incarnation,
Now presides at culmination.

HIS STAR

Speeding through the ether in flight
Past all comprehension, this night
He blazes in the star be-strewn
Firmament, as one before unknown;
Unique in splendor, transcendent
For magnitude, of strange portent!
Such visitor, or stellar guest,
At once so novel and dazzling,
Arrests and holds, in fixedness
Of notice, the scrutinizing
Gaze both of many sapient men,
And of the toiling ones who ken.
Divers observers, of diverse
Occupations, came from divers
Places by this rare vision lit.
Shepherds, watching their flocks by night,
Entranced, stood gazing into heaven;

¹¹ The distance light traverses in one year.

BENEATH THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

When God's glory, around them strewn,
Shone so that they were sore afraid,
Till voice benign from ether said,
" Behold, good tidings of great joy
I bring, which shall all people thrill:
For unto you this day one bore
In David's city a Saviour!
Go seek the Christ, your mighty prince,
In humble form of helpless babe
By mother draped in cheapest chintz,
And now to sleep with cattle laid."¹²

THE CHOIR

While listening to the message brought,
Heaven's choir in glad acclaim broke out.
All jacent fields and air above, around,
With entrancing melody resound.
Nature, through members all elate,
Felt the thrills of joy permeate:
Earth's rocks echoed the harmonies:
Parched deserts gleamed with glad surprise.¹³
Rivers and sea exultant leaped,
And ethereal waves, up heaped,
Beat 'gainst the vibrant walls celest.
" Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace;—good-will to men,"
Ran the swelling chorus and refrain.

¹² Luke ii. 11.

¹³ Is. xxxv. 1.

BENEATH THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

EARS THAT DO NOT HEAR

Why then did Bethlehem not hear,
And Jerusalem, too, so near?
Why were all men for miles around,
Through all this, wrapped in sleep profound?
Ears can discern only those sounds
To which those ears are here attuned;
Hearts feel the throbs of kindred hearts;
Souls with responsive souls commune.
And thus, we think, God's presence is,
To the pure, heaven;—to wicked, hell.—
The future state of mortals is
Complete adjustment to their will.

THE SHEPHERDS

These shepherds,¹⁴ then, of God elect
From all the hosts of Judah's sect,
Heeded first the glad announcement,
By heavenly ambassador sent,
And hastened the summons to obey.
Speeding to cave, where the child lay
In cradle crude, in slumber sweet.
In silent wonder and devout,
They scanned the face, which fairly blazed
With the Father's glory: Then dazed
With strangest awe, and reverence,

¹⁴ Luke ii. 8.

BENEATH THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

They, first of earth's inhabitants,
Obeisance made; were first to adore;
And by their deeds, covertly swore
Allegiance to God's only son,—
To found a Kingdom, earth-ward come.

CENTRUM

Or rather, it were better told,
This Christ was now, in feeble mould,
From mid-universe projected:—
Where *Centrum* is situated;
The adamantine throne of Jah,
Whence pulse all forms of energy,
Divine, physical, spiritual;—
Into this less sphere, his footstool:
To single combat here to dare
“The prince of the power of the air,”
Satan:—who, by grossest display
Of powers, now had unbridled sway
O'er consciences and acts of men,
Into hell's service conscribing them.

SON OF DAVID

How meet it was—of heaven ordered,
That here;—where the first great David
Was born; where his flocks, as shepherd,
He led to graze; from dangers saved;
Foes slew; and as he watched by night,

BENEATH THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

From firmament aglow with light,
Caught inspiration that distilled
From many a psalm which he filled
With praises of God, His plan, design,
And all His attributes, both benign
And terrible:—How meet, forsooth,
That here, that scion fair, and greatest
Of his regal house-tree, should be set!
Of whom Jehovah's prophet said,
" Behold, I shall the Branch bring forth,
My servant, but coequal in worth,
To execute judgment in the earth! " ¹⁵

THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE

From fatal day in Eden's bower,
When man first ate, and felt the power
Of insatiable wish to know
Secrets of God, above, below,
Till now.—Whate'er is strange or new,
Unable to demonstrate or do,
He either racks his brain to find,
Or if perplexing quite to mind,—
All theories faulty;—sighs, " Lo!
This is thus, since God made it so! "

Again, the captive spirit beats
Ever with restless wing the bars
Material that hedge it round,
When fain 'twould soar among the stars.

¹⁵ Zech. iii. 8. Jer. xxiii. 5.

BENEATH THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

First-men, then, with pleased eyes began
The stellar beauties of sky to scan.
As they gazed, fancy freely sketched
Outlines of constellations, stretched
O'er all the canvas of the sky.
Heroes of earth for places vie,
On heaven's emblazoned field of blue,
And animals, wild, tame, old and new.

ASTROLOGY

By little, their phases noted were,
And strange connections traced
'Twixt them, moving on stellar sphere,
And human deeds enacted here.
The more the wise men studied,
The more conviction grew
That God had writ, in star-set signs,
The stories of the lives of men:—
That at one's natal day, some star,
Pre-eminent, rose to rule his life:
In some strange way, his guardian angel,
Vigil kept from special light-house,
And beamed from its unwearied round,
With glance that boded ill or good:—
Now declining, in ascendant now,
Man's fortunes waned, or larger grew.

BENEATH THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

THE MAGI

So elsewhere, in regions disjoined,
And one from another remote,
God's mystic signs of stars conjoined
In order, caught the eye, and thought
Transfixed of sages, who had skill
To read the legends of His will.
So wholly unique, in splendor
And position, blazed a stranger
Before unnoted, name ungiven,
That by some common impulse driven
Magi from sundered nations came,
To seek the spot o'er which the same
Should rest, and serenely look down,
On Him who framed it for his own.
Somewhere, methinks, near Sea called Dead
Or in turbulent Jordan's plain,
These wise men convocation had.
Thence to Jerusalem they came,
In seat of State expecting to find,
As apt they should, Juda's new-born King.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

Such events soon caused a mighty stir.
Bruited about, rumor ran that heir
To David's throne, Restorer-King,
Last and noblest of his long line,
Now in marvelous way and sphere

BENEATH THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

Past finding, had at last appeared.
He of whom Moses and major
Prophets did write, and psalmists sing;
Redeemer, Messiah, Saviour,
Comforter, Seer, High Priest and King.

Then scribes to the Scriptures ordered,
Announced: "We find it thus recorded:
'And thou, Bethlehem, of Juda's land,
'Mong Juda's princes, art not least grand;
For out of thee shall Governor hail,
That shall rule my people Israel.'" ¹⁶
Forthwith obedient to the seer,
And glad at consummation near
Of all that arduous search; concerned,
Their faces toward Ephrata turned.

ADORATION

When these who diligently sought
The Lord, came to star-pointed spot
Where Mary and her babe reposed,
Forthwith, with one accord they paused,
And homage paid that helpless child,
Which strangely stirred their hearts, till *wild!*
As one his jewel-case unfolds,
These lavish worship of their *souls!*
They spread in rich profusion there,
At his feet, incense, gold, and myrrh.
Strange scenes these which strong men enact;

¹⁶ Micah v. 2.

BENEATH THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

But stranger yet the mother's state
Of mystery, all about her packed
So dense she could not penetrate.
Yet mother-like much pleased she was,
And full note took of all that passed;
Carrying each sacred secret
In her bosom, as trusts to be kept.¹⁷

JESUS SAVIOUR

Such in brief is story of advent
Of our Lord and Saviour;—*Jesus*,
By the mother named—by whom sent,
Known as *Christ*, who *relieves* us.
In the annals of the human race
Three thrilling events epochal face
Us, and all concern the footsteps trod
By this wonder-working man and God.
First, from beginning Creator
He; then Son of Man, Redeemer
Of the bankrupt slaves of evil;
In battles endless, fierce, with Devil
Contending for the souls of men:
Thus, through cycles of this eon;
And last, when Time no more shall stream,
Triumphant He shall rule Supreme,
No jar of discord nor taint of treason,
But Peace, Truth, and Godlike Reason.

¹⁷ Luke ii. 19.

BENEATH THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

JESUS CREATOR

“ In the beginning was the Word;
The Word was with God, aye was God.
By Him all things that are, were made;
And without Him *nothing* is stayed;—
For in Him was Life, and from Him
Emanates Life, and all that gives vim.” ¹⁸

SATAN

First, since Satan, by strange permit,
Had entered Paradise and had smit
The image of God, in person man,
Christ has come, the second Adam
Regenerate, and with power rife
To give each man new lease on life.
Now the fight is strangely *human*,
Which ranged aforetime in heaven;
Till God's legions, triumphant,
Hurled Satan from its battlements.
Hence two Knights in combat single
For mastery of each soul mingle.
Each mind a battle-field displays;
All fields are manifold the days!
Pause! and try the carnage to conceive
That sin has caused since time of Eve!

¹⁸ John i. 1-4.

BENEATH THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

JESUS AGONISTES

“ Think not,” said Christ, “ that I, the Word,
Will send peace on earth, but a sword ”;¹⁹
The fight I wage (no quarters ever)
Shall daughter from mother sever,
Father array against dearest son,
And 'twixt kindred peoples schism run;
Till all stiff knees to me shall bend,
And tongues confess me Lord at end.
Till Satan, that dread old dragon,
Be bound and into unfathomed
Pit be cast, and under seal be kept
Till his millennial respite;
And on till hell and sin at last
In lake of endless fire be cast
And Death and the chilly grave
Swallowed be in victory's wave.

STRUGGLING MAN

So John in Apocalypse forecasts
The struggle, unceasing while time lasts;
Distinctly sees the domination
Of love o'er Hate and all his faction.
Long chiliads of years had passed
Before the second Adam came.
Through all this drear and tedious time,

¹⁹ Matt. x. 30.

BENEATH THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

Man's visions of God were vague and dim.
Man having no law, conscience-taught
Life's burdens bore and battles fought.²⁰
Lex talionis swayed beast and man
Alike; eye for eye, hand for hand.
Perverted view of natural law
And moral forces, Satan saw,
Could man's progress retard or stay,
Or turn his feet to error's way.
For resultant of balanced forces
Is rest; of moral opposites, is
Stagnation. Christ came not to destroy
But fulfill; Not to bring pain but joy.
For hither, to Bethlehem apace,
Came last of Israel's royal race
To teach in a purer, sweeter verse
The harmonies of his universe.
Love attracts, Hate repels. At heart
Of all synthetic effort, that;
Of analytic, this: that ion,
Edification—this, *destruction*.

REVERIE

The night advances—frosty needles prick
The face upturned to faultless sky, thick
Set with many a scintillating star,
Each a sun and gem in coronet of Jah.
Shadowy forms of ruined piles and village—

²⁰ Rom. i. 20 and ii. 14.

BENEATH THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

Homes, as comfortless as though fresh from pillage
Of Ishmaelite, rise up like gory ghosts
To chill the blood:—and ghouls collect in hosts.
These are the phantoms of many races,
Which fought for mastery of all these places:
For tramping millions, from every nation,
That by its prowess, reached highest station,
Have battled here, on every foot of ground
Of this strange land, by Abram sought and found.
From Egyptian down to Turk, all conspired
To complete this desolation so weird,
That now oppresses every pained sense,
Makes brain to reel, and every heart-string tense.

When Shiloh came, Judah's scepter, broken
Fell; Now, since thirteen centuries, the token
Of the Christ, the cross, has yielded place
To crescent. Came this blight with Moslem race?

To me these people seem to be oppress
With life, since by its burdens so distress.
True, *many* claim from Abram their descent;
All hail prophet by God of Abram sent.
No joyous children did I see to-day;—
Sad-eyed and bleared—aye, leprous men decay,
While their spiritless frames creep here and there;
Mute types of desolation and despair!
What means it all? Where the seven candlesticks,
Of near-by Asia Minor, which Paul fixt?
Where, oh, where the Christ, who fought the devil
here?
Why does the vanquished now victor appear?

RELIGIOUS WARS

The mind pursues the tide of Christendom
Westward flowing from Asiatic home,
With horror views the wars in Europe waged,
Like a chopped sea that seethed and frothed and
 raged.

Saddest of all, where vortex is blackest,
I see the mangled body of the Christ.
Hear the angry cross-waves (the contending sects)
Crying each, mid din, and with wrangling vext,
“Lo! Here is Christ!”—then with buffet—“Lo!
 there!”

Hosts rise in frenzy, to sink in despair!
When from abysses of blood some emerge,
And more tranquil seem at first to converge,
Protestant seeks to convert Catholic,
Whether Roman, Greek, or later Anglic;
And these, in turn, restrain or interdict
The Dissenter, and penance would inflict;
While all with one accord, but uncombined,
Assail the citadels of human mind.
Iconoclasts all, they have sought to break
Both the idols and ideals which men make.
In government and religion, turmoil
Endless has prevailed, and with pain and toil,
Tentative measures are taken, in state
And church, man to curb or improve his state.

BENEATH THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

All assail Confucianism, Shintoism,
Buddhism, each evoking antagonism.

Conditions change; Experiments persist—
And will, while man and his problem exist.

WHAT IS TRUTH?

But, where, oh, where is Christ? Fights He no
more?

Alas! His own mother knew him not; nor
Did the twelve, daily with Him seen on earth,
Hearing Him teach, e'er comprehend His worth.
Somehow, somewhere, from midst of human unrest,
He moves, as when with uplift hands He blest.

THE RECALL

Come back, my soul, from wanderings far and
sad!—

Dismiss those sprites, in somber vestments clad,
That fain would haunt you with drear dreams this
night;

And fix your gaze on heavens aglow with light.

Mark pure Hesperus regnant in the West!

Dedicate by Greek to her, who has blest

The earth with that love, at root of all lives:

Fittest way to them to apotheosize

That wondrous universal magnetism,

Which constructs and conserves each organism.

Venus is type of biologic force:

BENEATH THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

But Christ alone *informs* the spirit's course.
Bridegroom is He, and Holy church the bride;
Offspring, "the pure in heart"—These shall abide.
Essence of His teachings the leaven is,
That leavens humanity with righteousness.
In gross forms of humanly organized
Churches and Societies, Truth is prized.
Be there little or much, it ever works,
Subduing self and sin and errant Kirks.

THE UPLIFTED CHRIST

So the uplifted Christ, great central magnet,
Is drawing all men unto Him: Not dragnet,
Forcibly collecting, but discerning
The best: the pure gold from dross refining.

Again, it is the living Christ conserves
The social forces: 'T' exalt him that *serves*,
He came, *abides* to teach us how to *live*,
Not to *die*. To him that hath, will He give.²¹
By making a life successful, He saves:
He gives th' immortal soul the food it craves.
The *unfed* spirit of inanition dies,
When its empty casket in sheol lies:
But that nourished by truth no confines knows;
More god-like through eternity grows.

²¹ Matt. xiii. 12 and xxv. 29. Mark iv. 25. Luke viii. 18. John xv. 2.

BENEATH THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

COMPLIN

Ah! Close the casement now.
The night grows still more chill.
To God the Father bow,
And beg to know His will
More perfectly. Then we'll sleep
Well. He will his vigil keep.
Bury, Father, for the Past, its dead sorrow,
And resurrect for us a glad to-morrow.
Gilded sentries of the sky,
Glisten!
Wondrous scenes you seem to be
Revealing.
Restless questioners, as we lie,
Listen!
Ravishing notes are floating by,
A-pealing,
Like those heard by the shepherd
Watching,
Lull they all our senses quite,
And please us.
Faith and courage most superb
Catching,
All to Thee, we yield, this night,
O Jesus!

(*Sleeps.*)

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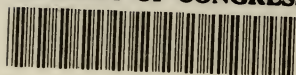
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